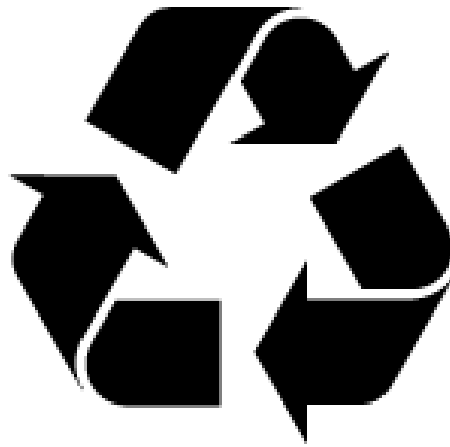


# KENTUCKY RECYCLING MARKET ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

## SCHOOL RECYCLING GUIDE



**An introductory guide to developing and  
operating an effective school recycling program**



Division of Waste  
Management



Energy and Environment Cabinet

## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The Kentucky Recycling Marketing Assistance (KRMA) Program has developed this guide for teachers, and other education professionals, who are interested in developing a school-based recycling program. This guide provides a generalized methodology that will allow you to build a program to fit your specific school setting. The process is straightforward and details the essential steps towards building a successful program. More detailed information, as well as onsite technical assistance, is available upon request.



## SCHOOL RECYCLING FACTS

Public and private schools in the Commonwealth are encouraged to develop recycling programs to provide our youth an opportunity to learn about conservation of resources, economics of supply and demand and important environmental issues. In fact, Kentucky Revised Statute 160.294 states that each local board of education shall recycle white paper and cardboard in all board-owned and operated facilities. A board of education may be exempt if there is no recycling facility within the county or within a reasonable distance, or if it will cause the district to incur a negative fiscal impact.

Kentuckians face a difficult situation in preserving the Commonwealth's environmental quality. Our students will have to deal with their waste and the legacy of waste that we adults are currently leaving behind. A school recycling program will raise the awareness of students, teachers, administrators and parents about the positive effects of environmental responsibility.

## YOUR RECYCLING PROGRAM

A successful recycling program begins with a successful plan. The basic steps needed in forming that plan are:

- 1. Organizing a Team.** Teamwork is a critical part of any successful recycling program. The team leader, or program coordinator, should be the individual most capable of planning and monitoring the program, so that it will run smoothly and effectively. The team should include teachers, students, custodial staff and perhaps cafeteria staff. Initially, they will assist in planning the program, ensuring proper publicity, and monitoring general operations. In the early stages, the team will provide information for planning purposes. As the program matures, the team may grow into an advisory capacity to the team leader. 
- 2. Conducting a waste audit.** Getting to "know your trash" is a critical step in planning a school recycling program. Knowing the types and volumes of solid waste being generated will allow you to determine which materials to collect. The typical school will generate a large quantity of several grades of paper (white paper, mixed paper, corrugated paper and newspaper), plastics (HDPE and PET), aluminum cans, and steel cans. Some places to look for recyclables are the classrooms, cafeteria, lounge, offices and vending machine areas. The audit should determine points of origin, types and volumes. Consider what portions could be recycled, reused, reduced or eliminated. Include recommendations for substituting recyclables for materials that cannot be recycled in the audit. 
- 3. Identifying Your Markets.** The first rule of recycling is to begin at the end, or know your markets first. Do not do any planning until you know what markets are available to sell the items you want to collect. Keep in mind that long transportation hauls can be very costly. Two approaches to marketing your school's recovered materials are:

- a. Join an existing recycling program such as one operated by the county or municipality where the school is located.
- b. Market the school's recovered materials directly to a recycling firm. An example would be to sell aluminum cans directly to a scrap metal dealer or sell paper to a paper recycling firm. You may find a firm that will handle all the materials you collect. Check the phone book for businesses listed under *recycling centers*, *scrap metal*, *waste paper*, or *junk dealers*. Find out which materials each company collects and how the materials must be prepared for acceptance. Ask if the materials must be delivered or if the company will pick them up and who pays for transportation. Ask about the pricing structure and if they offer contracts. A contract should specify the types and grades of material being sold, delivery and pick-up arrangements, duration, price setting mechanism and services to be provided by the buyer and seller.



**REMEMBER:** There is a difference between recycling and collecting used materials. If you are gathering materials that cannot be returned to the productive economic mainstream in the form of new raw materials, you are not recycling.

4. **Deciding what to recycle.** Once you have determined the types of waste that can be marketed locally and you have conducted a waste audit of your school's waste stream, you will have the information needed to decide what to recycle. It is best to start with a limited number of materials and add others as the collection system develops and the program is successful.



5. **Establishing a system for collecting and storing recovered materials.** Most, if not all, items should have collection containers at the place of origin. For example, each classroom should have a container to collect paper, and a container for steel cans should be placed in the kitchen area of the cafeteria. Aluminum can collection containers should be located near the vending machines and in areas of consumption like the teachers' lounge and the cafeteria.

A separate area must be established where all the recovered materials can be aggregated prior to shipping. For example, the aluminum can collection container in the cafeteria may fill up and need to be emptied sooner than the one in the teachers' lounge.



Another important element to consider is contamination. A good way to keep contamination at a minimum is to use primary collection containers that have openings only large enough to accept the material they are designated for. The aluminum can container might have a round opening in the top that is only large enough for a pop can. A container to collect paper may only have a slot in the top to discourage users from putting trash in it. Containers must be clearly identified and labeled with the type of material collected to prevent contamination.

The collected materials must be monitored to ensure quality. If contamination exists, the buyer may not want the materials, or may even reject a load.

6. **Setting goals.** Start out with realistic goals that can be met, both for individual classes and for the whole school. Grade school students will try especially hard if they know what is expected of them. For the youngest students, the goal could be broken down to bringing in four items per week, for example.



Maintain and post an accurate tally of how much each student or class contributes to the recycling effort. A tally will be important if the school intends to reward the highest achievers.

7. **Educating the School and the Community.** Notify the entire staff (including all teachers, clerical staff, cafeteria staff and custodians) and students about the recycling program. They will want to know how the program will operate and when collection will occur. For example, will collection occur every day, one day a week, or one day a month? A display with examples of recyclables to be collected and the collection containers will clear up many questions for those participating.

Publicity is essential to the success of the program. Before the start of the program, spread the word by use of posters, public address announcements, feature stories in the school newspaper and discussions in the classroom. Hold a contest to develop a logo or slogan. Many schools have incorporated lessons on the environment and recycling into the curriculum. If students understand the importance of recycling, they may be motivated to participate more actively in the program.



The recycling team should visit the recycling centers that will accept the school's recyclable materials and see how the materials the school collects are prepared for sale. Staff from the recycling centers or the county solid waste coordinator may be willing to come to the school to give presentations to the students about recycling and the importance of correct preparation of the material. In Kentucky, get in touch with the solid waste coordinator through the county judge executive's office.

8. **Establishing a reward program.** It is important to stress that recycling helps the environment and that itself is a reward that everyone enjoys. Beyond that, a prize system will motivate students to do their best. Consider class size when establishing prizes so that all classes have an equal chance of winning.

Examples of prizes that most students enjoy are pizza parties, a field trip to the zoo or elsewhere, additions or equipment for outdoor classrooms and new playground equipment. Prizes can be donated by local merchants or bought with the proceeds from the recycling drive. Individual students can be rewarded with special recognition or gift certificates.



## NEED MORE HELP?

We hope this guide has given you a solid foundation for developing a school-based recycling program. As the program grows, you may have questions about properly managing its growth and linking it to other local recycling initiatives. The Kentucky Recycling Market Assistance Program is experienced in providing onsite assistance in these, and other technical areas. Best of all, our onsite consultation and marketing assistance is free. To learn more about our services, browse our website at <http://www.waste.ky.gov/branches/rla/Recycling+Assistance+Section.htm>; or contact us at:

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